(a) what is the progress of development efforts by DRDO in regard to fighter aircraft engine KAVERI;

(b) whether the same has been subjected to high-altitude providing tests in Russian sites, and if so, the results thereof; and

(c) whether the DRDO is now looking for a technology partner from US to further develop KAVERI, and if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) Currently, four engines are running on test bed at Gas Turbine Research Establishment (GTRE), Bangalore, while two engines are being manufactured.

Reliability and safety tests are being carried out to demonstrate compliance to the strictest standards in this direction. First flight over a limited envelope may take place in early 2007. Simultaneously, efforts are being made to improve thrust and reduce weight.

(b) One Prototype Engine and one Core Engine were tested at high altitude test facility of M/s Central Institute of Aviation Motors (CIAM), Russia.

The tests revealed that the engine would function satisfactorily in many aspects over the flight envelope of the Kaveri. Deficiencies noted are being corrected.

(c) While the engine development has matured to a significant extent, it has been decided to look for a technology partner to accelerate the pace of development.

With that view in mind, a request for proposal (RFP) was sent to various designated engine houses of the world. Offers received are being technically evaluated.

Development of medium combat Aircraft

916. SHRIMATI S.G. INDIRA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government is considering to make tie-ups to develop medium combat aircrafts;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) what is the total amount so far spent by Government on the development of Light Combat Aircraft?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) and (b) Preliminary studies have been initiated at Aeronautical Development Agency ((ADA), Bangalore to conceptualise Medium Combat Aircraft (MCA) with a view to exploit indigenous technologies/expertise developed under the Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Development Programme.

(c) As on 31st March 2005, audited expenditure incurred on LCA programme is:—

Full Scale Engineering Development (FSED) Phase-I, Rs. 2188 crore.

Full Scale Engineering Development (FSED) Phase-ll, Rs. 988.21 crore

Full Scale Engineering Development (FSED) Navy Rs. 38.68 crore.

Exemption from Right to Information Act

917.SHRIMATI N.P DURGA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Ministry has requested the Ministry of personnel to exempt all the three Services from the purview of the Right to Information Act, 2005;

(b) whether it is also a fact that the Ministry is demanding to keep its Services out of the purview of the the Act since the paramilitary forces have also been taken out of the purview of the Right to Information Act;

(c) if not, the reasons therefor; and

(d) why is it insisting to enjoy exemptions by including its Services under Schedule 2 of the Act?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) to (d) The activities of the Armed Forces have a bearing on national security and sovereignty. The Ministry of Defence, therefore, has requested the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions to include the Armed Forces in the Second Schedule of the Right to Information Act, 2005.